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NSC BRIEFING

15 July 1954

GENEVA CONFERENCE

- I. Communists are expected to offer Mendes-France an Indochina settlement by his 20 July deadline.
  - A. Communist proposals certainly will not be in accord with the US-UK seven conditions for respecting an Indochina settlement.
- II. A settlement is being explored this week in a variety of private talks *at GENEVA*:
  - A. The French delegation is meeting with the Soviet, Chinese Communist and Viet Minh delegations.
  - B. The Laotians and Cambodians have been meeting with the Viet Minh in military talks.
  - C. Vietnamese officials have scheduled meetings with all three Communist delegations.
- III. The Communist package emerging from these talks is expected to include a cease-fire, a partition of Vietnam and Laos, and an outline for a political settlement.
  - A. Ambiguities in the Communist proposals would tend to make it easier for the French to accept them.

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B. Once accepted, the proposals would certainly require further negotiations with the French, Laotians and Cambodians.

IV. Communist proposals are expected to make the maximum claims on Vietnam, a lesser claim on Laos, the least on Cambodia.

A. Partition of Vietnam at some point between 14th and 18th parallels, with general elections to follow.

B. Communist control of some part of Laos, with the remainder of Laos neutralized and with an agreement on the first steps toward coalition government.

C. Neutralization of Cambodia, with some form of recognition accorded the Communist "resistance movement" there.

V. There are several possible combinations of proposals for a territorial division of Vietnam and Laos.

A. The Communists are currently pressing for division of Vietnam at the 14th parallel, and a large slice of eastern Laos, whereas the French have proposed division of Vietnam near the 18th parallel and have indicated willingness to accept Communist control of a small part of Laos.

BAN ON FOREIGN  
BASES, RESTRICTION  
ON DEFENSIVE  
CAPABILITIES

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B. The Communists might accept the Dong Hoi line for Vietnam if they can get control of an area in southern Vietnam and a strip of Laos.

C. They might well settle for a partition of both Vietnam and Laos along the Dong Hoi-Thakhek line, the reported French defense line for the two states, which would give them control of the northern half of Indochina.

VI. These proposals would violate the US-UK conditions for respecting a settlement in several respects.

A. The integrity of Laos and Cambodia would not be preserved.

B. Restrictions would be imposed on the defensive capabilities of all three states.

C. Political agreements would risk the loss of two or perhaps all three of the states.

D. Effective machinery for international supervision of a truce would not have been established.

VII. The vulnerability of France and the Associated States to these proposals is uncertain.

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- A. Although Mendes-France reportedly intends to take a hard line with the Communists this week, he has bid for American support in inducing the Vietnamese to accept a settlement.
- B. The Vietnamese may be trying to bypass the French and get the best possible terms for themselves.
- C. The Laotians are reportedly split on whether to recognize and negotiate with the Communist-sponsored "Pathet Lao" movement there.
- D. At last report the Cambodians were holding firm in resisting Viet Minh demands and were hoping for promises of American support.

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